Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 11, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

We write to request a transcribed interview of Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director, U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). Excerpts of emails we are making public today (see enclosed Appendix I) reveal that Dr. Fauci was warned of two things: (1) the potential that COVID-19 leaked from the Wuhan Institute Virology (WIV) and (2) the possibility that the virus was intentionally genetically manipulated. It is imperative we investigate if this information was conveyed to the rest of the government and whether this information would have changed the U.S. response to the pandemic.

Despite Dr. Fauci claiming otherwise on multiple occasions, he was, in fact, aware of the monetary relationship between NIAID, the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), EcoHealth Alliance Inc. (EcoHealth), and the WIV by January 27, 2020.[1] Dr. Fauci also knew that NIAID worked with EcoHealth to craft a grant policy to sidestep the gain-of-function moratorium at the time.[2] This new policy, designed by EcoHealth and agreed to by NIAID, allowed EcoHealth to complete dangerous experiments on novel bat coronaviruses—with very little oversight—that would have otherwise been blocked by the moratorium.[3] In January 2020, Dr. Fauci was also aware that EcoHealth was not in compliance with the terms of its grant that funded the WIV.[4] EcoHealth was required to submit an annual progress report to NIAID by September 30, 2019, and had not yet done so.[5] The Committee subsequently learned that EcoHealth failed to submit these reports presumably to hide a gain-of-function experiment conducted on infectious and potentially lethal novel bat coronaviruses.[6]

By January 27, 2020, Dr. Fauci knew NIAID had funded EcoHealth, the WIV was a subgrantee of EcoHealth, and EcoHealth was not in compliance with its grant reporting, in particular a grant that NIAID knew had gain-of-function potential on novel bat coronaviruses. It

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[1] Email from Greg Folkers to Anthony Fauci, et. al. (Jan. 27, 2020) (On file with Comm. Staff); Zachary Basu, *Fauci and Rand Paul clash over NIH funding for Wuhan Institute of Virology,* AXIOS (May 11, 2021).
[2] Sharon Lerner & Mara Hvistendahl, *NIH Officials Worked with EcoHealth Alliance to Evade Restrictions on Coronavirus Experiments,* INTERCEPT (Nov. 3, 2021).
[3] *Id.*
[4] Letter from Lawrence Tabak to James Comer (Oct. 20, 2021).
[5] *Id.*
[6] *Id.*

is unclear if Dr. Fauci reported any of these issues to his superiors. We need to know the entirety of what Dr. Fauci knew and when he knew it.

On February 1, 2020, Dr. Fauci, Dr. Collins, and at least eleven other scientists convened a conference call to discuss COVID-19.[7] It was on this conference call that Drs. Fauci and Collins were first warned that COVID-19 may have leaked from the WIV and, further, may have been intentionally genetically manipulated. Again, it is unclear if either Dr. Fauci or Dr. Collins ever passed these warnings along to other government officials or if they simply ignored them.

Only three days later, on February 4, 2020, four participants of the conference call authored a paper entitled "The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2" and sent a draft to Drs. Fauci and Collins.[8] Prior to final publication in *Nature Medicine*, the paper was sent to Dr. Fauci for editing and approval.[9] It is unclear what, if any, new evidence was presented or if the underlying science changed in that short period of time, but after speaking with Drs. Fauci and Collins, the authors abandoned their belief COVID-19 was the result of a laboratory leak. It is also unclear if Drs. Fauci or Collins edited the paper prior to publication.

On April 16, 2020, more than two months after the original conference call, Dr. Collins emailed Dr. Fauci expressing dismay that the *Nature Medicine* article—which they saw prior to publication and were given the opportunity to edit—did not squash the lab leak hypothesis and asks if the NIH can do more to "put down" the lab leak hypothesis.[10] The next day—after Dr. Collins explicitly asked for more public pressure—Dr. Fauci cited the *Nature Medicine* paper from the White House podium likely in an effort to further stifle the hypothesis COVID-19 leaked from the WIV.[11]

Rather than be transparent with the Committee, HHS and NIH continue to hide, obfuscate, and shield the truth. By continuing to refuse to cooperate with our request, your agencies are choosing to hide information that will help inform the origins of the ongoing pandemic, prevent future pandemics, respond to future pandemics, inform the United States' current national security posture, and restore confidence in our public health experts. HHS and NIH's continued obstruction is likely to cause irreparable harm to the credibility of these agencies. The emails released today raise significant questions, including but not limited to:

1. Did Drs. Fauci or Collins warn anyone at the White House about the potential COVID-19 originated in a lab and could be intentionally genetically manipulated?

2. If these concerns were not shared, why was the decision to keep them quiet made?

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[7] Email from Jeremy Farrar to Anthony Fauci, et. al. (Feb. 1, 2020) (On file with Comm. Staff).
[8] Email from Jeremy Farrar to Anthony Fauci & Francis Collins (Feb. 4, 2020) (On file with Comm. Staff)
[9] Email from Kristian Andersen to Anthony Fauci, Francis Collins, & Jeremy Farrar (Mar. 6, 2020) (On file with Comm. staff).
[10] Email from Francis Collins to Anthony Fauci, et. al. (Apr. 16, 2020) (On file with Comm. Staff).
[11] John Haltiwanger, *Dr. Fauci throws cold water on conspiracy theory that coronavirus was created in a Chinese lab,* BLOOMBERG (Apr. 18, 2020).

3. What new evidence, if any, came to light about COVID-19 between February 1, 2020 and February 4, 2020 to alter the belief it originated in a lab?

4. Did Drs. Fauci or Collins edit the *Nature Medicine* paper entitled “The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2”?

5. Would having this knowledge earlier have benefitted either vaccine or treatment development?

6. By February 1, 2020, were Drs. Fauci or Collins aware of the State Department’s warnings about WIV safety?

7. Would this warning have changed the early response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

These questions are vital to understanding this and future pandemic responses. Unfortunately, thus far, HHS and its subordinate agency have hidden behind redactions to shield these emails from public scrutiny. We call on you to immediately lift these redactions and produce the email communications to Congress. Further, considering the import of the above questions, we request Dr. Anthony Fauci be made immediately available to sit for a transcribed interview. Please respond by January 18, 2022 to confirm.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler, Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

Appendix I

These emails were originally produced redacted via the Freedom of Information Act and subsequently to Committee Republicans. At the request of Committee Republicans and pursuant to the Seven Member Rule, the Department of Health and Human Services made unredacted versions available for an *in camera* review but not available to the public. Committee staff, to the best of their ability, hand transcribed the contents of the emails and excerpts of those transcriptions are reproduced below. Unless otherwise noted, emphasis is added.

Notes from Participants on February 1, 2020 Conference Call

1. **Email from Dr. Jeremy Farrar to Drs. Francis Collins, Anthony Fauci, and Lawrence Tabak**

From: Jeremy Farrar [redacted] (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, February 2, 2020 6:53 AM
To: Collins, Francis (NIH/OD) [E] [redacted] (b) (6)
Cc: Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E] [redacted] (b) (6)>; Tabak, Lawrence (NIH/OD) [E] [redacted] (b) (6)
Subject: Re: Teleconference

Thank you

See thoughts overnight from others.

(b) (5) [redacted]

(b) (5) [redacted]

From Mike Farzan (discoverer of SARS receptor):

1. The RBD didn't look 'engineered' to him – as in, no human would have selected the individual mutations and cloned them into the RBD (I think we all agree)
2. Tissue culture passage can often lead to gain of basic sites – including furin cleavage sites (this is stuff they have seen with human coronaviruses)
3. He is bothered by the furin site and has a hard time explain that as an event outside the lab (though, there are possible ways in nature, but highly unlikely)
4. Instead of directed engineering, changes in the RBD and acquisition of the furin site would be highly compatible with the idea of continued passage of virus in tissue culture
5. Acquisition of the furin site would likely destabilize the virus but would make it disseminate to new tissues.

So, given above, a likely explanation could be something as simple as passage SARS-live CoVs in tissue culture on human cell lines (under BSL-2) for an extended period of time, accidently creating a virus that would be primed for rapid transmission between humans via gain of furin site (from tissue culture) and adaption to human ACE2 receptor via repeated passage.

…So, I think it becomes a question of how do you put all this together, whether you believe in this series of coincidences, what you know of the lab in Wuhan, how much could be in nature – accidental release or natural event? I am 70:30 or 60:40.

From Bob [Garry]:

Before I left the office for the ball, I aligned nCoV with the 96% bat CoV sequenced at WIV. Except for the RBD the S proteins are essentially identical at the amino acid level – well all but the perfect insertion of 12 nucleotides that adds the furin site. S2 is over its whole length essentially identical. I really can't think of a plausible natural scenario where you get from the bat virus or one very similar to it to nCoV where you insert exactly 4 amino acids 12 nucleotide that all have to be added at the exact same time to gain this function – that and you don't change any other amino acid in S2? I just can't figure out how this gets accomplished in nature. Do the alignment of the spikes at the amino acid level – its stunning. Of course, in the lab it would be easy to generate the perfect 12 base insert that you wanted. Another scenario is that the progenitor of nCoV was a bat virus with the perfect furin cleavage site generated over

evolutionary times. In this scenario RaTG13 the WIV virus was generated by a perfect deletion of 12 nucleotides while essentially not changing any other S2 amino acid. Even more implausible IMO.

That is the big if.

You were doing gain of function research you would NOT use an existing close of SARS or MERSv. These viruses are already human pathogens. What you would do is close a bat virus th[at] had not yet emerged. Maybe then pass it in human cells for a while to lock in the RBS, then you reclone and put in the mutations you are interested – one of the first a polybasic cleavage site.

2. **Email from Dr. Francis Collins to Drs. Jeremy Farrar, Anthony Fauci, and Lawrence Tabak**

From: Francis Collins [redacted] (b) (6)>
Date: Sunday, 2 February 2020 at 10:27
To: Jeremy Farrar [redacted] (b) (6)
Cc: "Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E]" [redacted] (b) (6), "Tabak, Lawrence (NIH/OD) [E]" [redacted] (b) (6)
Subject: RE: Teleconference

Jeremy,

[redacted] (b) (5)

I'm available any time today except 3:15 – 5:45 pm EST (on a plane) for a call to Tedros. Let me know if I can help get through his thicket of protectors.

Francis

> … Though the arguments from Ron Fouchier and Christian Drosten are presented with more forcefulness than necessary, I am coming around to the view that a natural origin is more likely. But I share your view that a swift convening of experts in a confidence inspiring framework (WHO seems really the only option) is needed, or the voices of conspiracy will quickly dominate, doing great potential harm to science and international harmony…

3. **Email from Dr. Andrew Rambaut to Drs. Jeremy Farrar, Anthony Fauci, Patrick Vallance, Christian Drosten, Marion Koopmans, Edward Holmes, Kristian Andersen, Paul Schreier, Mike Ferguson, Francis Collins, and Josie Golding**

From: '[redacted] (b) (6)
Date: Sunday, 2 February 2020 at 09:38
To: Jeremy Farrar <[redacted] (b) (6)>
Cc: [redacted] (b) (6)>, "Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E]" [redacted] (b) (6), Patrick Vallance [redacted] (b) (6)>, "Drosten, Christian" [redacted] (b) (6), Marion Koopmans <[redacted] (b) (6), Edward Holmes [redacted] (b) (6) [redacted] (b) (6), "Kristian G. Andersen" [redacted] (b) (6), Paul Schreier [redacted] (b) (6) Michael FMedSci [redacted] (b) (6)>, Francis Collins [redacted] (b) (6) [redacted] (b) (6) Josie Golding [redacted] (b) (6)
Subject: Re: Teleconference

Dear Jeremey, Ron and all,

Thanks for inviting me on the call yesterday. [redacted] (b) (5) (b) (5)

[redacted] (b) (5)

Best,
Andrew

Thanks for inviting me on the call yesterday. I am also agnostic on this – I do not have any experience of laboratory virology and don't know what is likely or not in that context. From a (natural) evolutionary point of view the only thing here that strikes me as unusual is the furin cleavage site. It strongly suggests to me that we are missing something important in the origin of the virus. My inclination would be that it is a missing host species in which this feature arose because it was selected for in that host. We can see this insertion has resulted in an extremely fit virus in humans – we can also deduce that it is not optimal for transmission in bat species.

… The biggest hinderance at the moment (for this and more generally) is the lack of data and information. There have been no genome sequences from Wuhan for cases more recent than the

beginning of January and reports, but no information, about virus from non-human animals in Wuhan. If the evolutionary origins of the epidemic were to be discussed, I think the only people with sufficient information or access to samples to address it would be the teams working in Wuhan.

4. Email from Dr. Ron Fouchier

On 2 Feb 2020, at 08:30, R.A.M. Fouchier [redacted] (b) (6)> wrote:

Dear Jeremy and others,

This was a very useful teleconference. [redacted] (b) (5)

(b) (5) [redacted]

Thanks for organizing this on such short notice,
Kind regards

Ron's notes:

(b) (5) [redacted]

… Given the evidence presented and the discussions around it, I would conclude that a follow-up discussion on the possible origin of 2019-nCoV would be of much interest. However, I doubt if it needs to be done on very short term, given the importance of other

activities of the scientific community, WHO and other stakeholders at present. It is my opinion that a non-natural origin of 2019-nCoV is highly unlikely at present. Any conspiracy theory can be approached with factual information.

… An accusation that nCoV-2019 might have been engineered and released into the environment by humans (accidental or intentional) would need to be supported by strong data, beyond a reasonable doubt. It is good that this possibility was discussed in detail with a team of experts. However, further debate about such accusations would unnecessarily distract top researchers from their active duties and do unnecessary harm to science in general and science in China in particular.

<u>Reaction to First Draft of *Nature Medicine* "The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2"</u>

1. **Email from Dr. Anthony Fauci to Drs. Jeremy Farrar and Francis Collins**

From: "Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E]" [redacted] (b)(6)
Date: Tuesday, 4 February 2020 at 13:18
To: Francis Collins <[redacted] (b)(6)>, Jeremy Farrar [redacted] (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Prevalence of infection and stage of the epidemic in Wuhan

?? [redacted] (b)(4)

Anthony S. Fauci, MD
Director
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
Building 31, Room 7A-03
31 Center Drive, MSC 2520
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20892-2520
Phone: [redacted] (b)(6)
FAX: (301) 496-4409
E-mail: [redacted] (b)(6)

…Serial passage in ACE2-transgenic mice

2. Email from Dr. Jeremy Farrar to Drs. Anthony Fauci and Francis Collins

From: Jeremy Farrar [redacted] (b) (6)
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 6:08 AM
To: Collins, Francis (NIH/OD) [E] [redacted] (b) (6)>
Cc: Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E] [redacted] (b) (6)>
Subject: Re: Prevalence of infection and stage of the epidemic in Wuhan

[redacted] (b) (4)

…[Eddie Holmes] 60-40 lab. I am 50-50…

3. Email from Dr. Francis Collins to Drs. Jeremy Farrar and Anthony Fauci

On 4 Feb 2020, at 10:58, Collins, Francis (NIH/OD) [E] [redacted] (b)(6)> wrote:

Very thoughtful analysis. [redacted] (b)(4) (b)(4)

Francis

From: Jeremy Farrar [redacted] (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 2:01 AM
To: Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E] [redacted] (b)(6)>; Collins, Francis (NIH/OD) [E] <[redacted] (b)(6)
Subject: FW: Prevalence of infection and stage of the epidemic in Wuhan

Please treat in confidence – a very rough first draft from Eddie and team – they will send on the edited, cleaner version later.

Pushing WHO again today

…[Eddie Holmes] arguing against engineering but repeated passage is still an option…

<u>Government Official Attempts to Stifle the Lab Leak Hypothesis</u>

1. **Email from Dr. Francis Collins to Drs. Anthony Fauci, Lawrence Tabak, Cliff Lane, and Mr. John Burklow**

From: Collins, Francis (NIH/OD) [E] [redacted] (b) (6)
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2020 5:02 PM
To: Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E] [redacted] (b) (6)
Cc: Tabak, Lawrence (NIH/OD) [E] [redacted] (b) (6); Lane, Cliff (NIH/NIAID) [E] [redacted] (b) (6); Burklow, John (NIH/OD) [E] [redacted] (b) (6)
Subject: conspiracy gains momentum

[redacted] (b) (5)

https://www.mediaite.com/tv/foxs-bret-baier-sources-increasingly-confident-coronavirus-outbreak-started-in-wuhan-lab/

[redacted] (b) (5)

Francis

Wondering if there is something NIH can do to help put down this very destructive conspiracy, with what seems to be growing momentum:

https://www.mediaite.com/tv/foxs-bret-baier-sources-increasingly-confident-coronavirus-outbreak-started-in-wuhan-lab/

I hoped the Nature Medicine article on the genomic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 would settle this. But probably didn't get much visibility.

Anything more we can do? Ask the National Academy to weigh in?

Francis

2. Email from Dr. Anthony Fauci to Dr. Francis Collins

From: Fauci, Anthony (NIH/NIAID) [E]
Sent: Fri, 17 Apr 2020 02:45:01 +0000
To: Collins, Francis (NIH/OD) [E]
Subject: RE: conspiracy gains momentum

Francis:

[redacted] (b) (5)

Best,
Tony

I would not do anything about this right now. It is a shiny object that will go away in times.